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THE RIGHT OF DEVELOPMENT

Written statement submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 December 1999]

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1. After the Second World War and with the wave of decolonization, the issues of "development", "underdevelopment" and "economic development" were widely raised and consequently various methods and approaches were introduced for dealing with them. The great interest of the countries of the South in development led them to adopt certain strategies to pave the way to development. Most of the underdeveloped countries believed that they could attain their lost rights, in particular the basic right to development; however, due to certain problems, such predictions were prevented from coming true. In between, because of the global system and some ill-structured mechanisms of the international economy - which is generally in the hands of the developed countries - the South's continuous efforts failed. The attempts made by the countries of the South to eliminate the obstacles to development failed, since it is quite evident that in the present international system countries of the North cannot tolerate any new competitor, any loss in their extensive sales markets or any weakness in their high economic position. Although the North has accepted the political dependence of the South for several reasons, its economic interests which resulted in the unfair and unequal relations with the developing countries can not be ignored and consequently, the North would never tolerate the growth and development of the South and the South's economic independence from the North.

2. Unfortunately, despite the various developments of humanity in different areas, the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing day by day. The least developed countries give several reasons which reveal the negligence of the international community - and in particular the North - towards this phenomenon. The growth in the wealth gap for millions of people, who pay the unjust price of living with poverty, death and various fatal diseases, is disturbing the public conscience. As has been stated in the report of the World Health Organization (WHO), poverty is among the main causes of death. Nearly 40 per cent of the deaths in the world are due to contagious diseases, which mainly occur in the least developed countries. The same ominous phenomenon - which is rooted in the unjust system of the global economy - has put people under more pressure. Also, it has destroyed the environment by cutting the trees and overusing the water resources in the developing countries. According to the statistics, almost 1 billion people in the world are illiterate. During the last 30 years, the per capita income of the developed countries has increased from about $ 5,700 to almost $ 16,000. Unfortunately, at the threshold of the new millennium, the world picture is not promising. Entering the year 2000 for the countries of the North means the end of infectious and fatal diseases, education for all, elimination of illiteracy, eradication of poverty and public prosperity, for most of the countries in the South - almost three fourths of the world's population - it means going ahead to the new millennium with all these miseries.

3. Although the situation of the people in the poor regions of the world has been discussed many times and in many forums, it seems necessary to mention certain facts here in regard to the right to development.

(a) South Asia. About 600 million people are living in poverty and are suffering from malnutrition. About half of the female population of the world is deprived of basic health facilities. There are around 50 million children who have no access to schools and more than 150 million children are working under appalling conditions;

(b) East Asia. There are about 170 million poor people in these countries. About 100 million young girls and boys are deprived of basic education. Almost 55 per cent of rural

people have little access to safe water and around 41 per cent have little access to hygienic services. The exploitation of children, and in particular the sexual exploitation of young girls and boys, is becoming more and more intolerable;

(c) Africa. There are over 215 million people living in extreme poverty. Also, there are 120 million adult illiterates and 170 million people suffering from hunger. Almost 80 million children in Africa do not attend school and over 20 per cent of African children are child labourers;

(d) Latin America and the Caribbean. Lack of basic education, poverty and disease are among the main problems of this area of the world. Currently, there are almost 100 million poor people and 30 million seeking a job to earn a living;

(e) Arab countries. In these countries there are almost 73 million poor people, 10 per cent of whom are suffering from severe malnutrition. There are still 60 million illiterate people among the Arabs. Almost half of the rural population living in the Arab countries have no access to safe and hygienic sources of water and only one third of them have access to hygienic services.

4. The industrial development of the developed countries and their consumption patterns have caused irreparable harm to the environment. Unfortunately, despite the various decisions and agreements by international conferences and forums, overconsumption, inappropriate methods of production; exploiting surface and underground natural resources; removing, transporting and burning dangerous chemical substances - in particular, nuclear wastes - have all caused serious damage to the land, water, weather and forests of the world. The component elements of the human environment are the crucial common heritage of humanity and its destruction is a threat to all the people of the world.

5. The developed countries, which have exploited the resources of the poor countries, intend to deprive the developing countries of their right to use their own resources to strengthen the bases of their development by imposing new commitments and obligations upon them. Although most Governments share the responsibility for the pollution of the environment, the main responsibility is on the shoulders of those who have had the most benefit from the resources. The developed countries, due to their undeniable role in damaging the environment and their enjoyment of modern technology and financial resources, have special legal and moral commitments in this case. It is not fair that the developing countries have to pay a heavy price for the pollution of the environment - which has been done by developed countries - and, at the same time, are deprived of their right to development.

6. In the process of globalization, not a single country or group of countries can overcome the problems of the international community. Unfortunately, this trend is also applicable in the field of development. The gap between the developing and the underdeveloped countries is growing. Despite all the efforts by the international community, the trend of global cooperation in the field of development has not been promising, and it is also not in line with the general spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. The badly-structured process of globalization and the inequalities and injustices that are part of it, along with absolute support for the capitalist system and the free market economy, have put the economic bases of the developing countries at risk of

complete destruction and, as a result, the economies of the developing countries have been marginalized. The United Nations should proceed in its efforts to reduce the present inequalities. In this vein the United Nations should urge the countries of the North to contribute to the true sustainable development of the countries of the South.

7. Can the countries of the North easily enter the third millennium without paying attention to the suffering of the people living in the South? The dangerous deprivation of the countries of the South of their right to development, ignorance of the phenomenon of poverty, preventing the developing countries from developing and imposing economic mechanisms which in the short run are beneficial to the North countries, in the long turn will not be beneficial and will endanger international peace and security.

8. Noting these tragic realities, the countries of the North, in order to compensate the countries of the South for their losses and to prevent the undesirable growth of poverty, which has led to social unrest and international crises, have no way other than to give more contributions and help to the South. If the growth in the international economy is to be in line with the development of human societies, the following should undoubtedly be taken into consideration:

(a) Creating job opportunities, providing appropriate facilities for a better life for the unemployed people living in the South;

(b) Increasing awareness, eliminating illiteracy and providing free and meaningful education for the people living in the underdeveloped countries;

(c) Not supporting dictators and dictatorships and trying to defend democratic participation in the other countries;

(d) Equitably distributing the wealth to the South, and finally;

(e) Publicly contributing to help the sustainable, continuous and comprehensive development of the countries of the South.

9. In the end, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, while welcoming the activities done in the framework of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, suggests that stronger mechanisms for monitoring the right to development should be established in the framework of the Commission on Human Rights.